This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Phil
8662
5.10

Holyoake- Clergy Avoid Discussion - 1852

Digitized by Google

Phil 8662.5.10

HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

WHY DO THE

CLERGY AVOID DISCUSSION,

AND THE

Philosophers Discountenance it?

BY GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

In Logic, they teach that contraries laid together more evidently appear: it follows, then, that all controversy being permitted, falsehood will appear more false and truth more true; which must needs conduce to the confirmation of an implicit truth.—MILTON.

LONDON:

JAMES WATSON, 3, QUEEN'S HEAD PASSAGE,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1852.

Digitized by Google

Phil 8662.5.10

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION

(Page 5.)

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS.

§1. The Power of Criticism.
§2. Indecision of Rationalists.
§3. Difficulties experienced by the Clergy.
§4. Exceptions and qualifications.

PART I.—THE PRIESTS.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

(Page 8.)

THE FIRST REASON: DISCUSSION HELD TO BE NEEDLESS AND PROFANE.

§1. Roman Catholics dissent from it.
§2. Protestants who decline it.
§3. The consequences advantageous.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

(Page 9.)

THE SECOND REASON: THE DREAD OF GIVING OPPONENTS IMPORTANCE.

§1. Importance not a thing the Christian should refuse.
§2. Discussion fatal to the weaker side.
§3. The Clergy aware of this.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

(Page 10.)

THE THIRD REASON: APPREHENSION OF OUTRAGE.

§1. Grossness conceded to be an offence.
§2. Outrage not confined to the Freethinking side.
§3. Fastidiousness implies a want of earnestness.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

(Page 12.)

THE FOURTH REASON: DISCUSSION CONSIDERED INCONTROLLABLE.

§1. Two requisites for Control—Respect and Audacity.
§2. The influence of mutual deference.
§3. Daring wins allegiance.
§4. Quarrels come by consent.
§5. Two intellectual rules of controversy.
§6. The understanding to be occupied.
§7. Danger of a dubious word.
§8. The moral sense to be addressed.
§9. Doubtful questions to be suspected.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

(Page 15.)

THE FIFTH REASON: THE FEAR OF DISCUSSION.

§1. Christians *not* Free Inquirers.
§2. The case of the Bingley class-leader.
§3. The Rev. T. Collisson, B.A.
§4. Burning the *Reasonêr*, etc.
§5. Instances in which the clergy fear discussion.
§6. Anecdote of Dr. Kalley.
§7. A soldier of the cross retreats.
§8. Other knights recreant.
§9. Christianity has its valient phases.
§10. Discussion a defence.
§11. The Everlasting Fire Insurance Society.
§12. The peril of belief.
§13. The fear of discussion a disrespect to Deity.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

(Page 26.)

THE SIXTH REASON: DISCUSSION NOT UNDERSTOOD IN ITS RESULTS.

§1. Discussion defined.
§2. The qualities it evolves.
§3. Uses of gladiators.
§4. The end of controversy *not* uncertain.
§5. Facilities due to opponents.
§ 6. The honourable objects of controversy.
§7. Just tactics.
§8. The law of conviction.
§9. The friendship of criticism.
§10. The incapable feed on interruptions.
§11. The classification of adversaries.
§12. The clergy voluntarily fight in the dark.
§13. Opposition under twopence.
§14. The *unanswerable* word left us.
§15. Impunity conceded to us.
§16. Obsolete opposition.
§17. The argument of the "flaw in the will."
§18. The argument of "poison."
§19. Disbelief in discussion not real.

PART II.—THE PHILOSOPHERS.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

(Page 31.)

THE APPREHENSIONS OF STATESMEN.

§1. The treatment of error.
§2. Ultimate recognition of discussion.
§3. Its service to the state.
§4. The progress of opinion a tragedy.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

(Page 32.)

DISCUSSION IN DANGER FROM PHILOSOPHERS.

§1. Success of the priests.
§2. The philosophers write down controversy.
§3. Intellectual agriculture.
§4. Fascination of this policy;
§5. But half of the truth—
§6. The policy of the incapable or the timid:
§7. The consequences in life.
§8. The reform of controversy the only remedy.
§9. Consent may be conquered from the world.
§10. Anecdote of the Dean of Carlisle.
§11. Anecdote of the Blackburn Lectures.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

(Page 36.)

THE THEORY OF FREE DISCUSSION STILL UNSETTLED.

§1. The decadence of discussion.
§2. The Library of all the Churches.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

(Page 37.)

THE PROBABLE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

§1. Intellectual solidarity.
§2. "Toleration, the virtue of doing nothing."
§3. Error to be helped as well as truth.
§4. The rule proposed.
§5. Obscenity less reprobated by priests than freethinking.
§6. Ribaldry suppressed by the rule proposed.
§7. Free discussion comes to be a public protection.
§8. Last words to the Clergy.

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS.

§1. When criticism was first applied to Christianity, Paul especially made audible complaint, beseeching the brethren "to *mark* them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrine they had learned,"* declaring him "*accursed*" who preached any other than the Pauline gospel;† stigmatising dissenters as "unruly, as vain talkers, and deceivers whose *mouths must be stopped*," and advising that they be "*rebuked sharply* that they may be sound in the faith."‡

This rudeness and intolerance was not without pernicious influence; and when Christians came into power they took care to suppress criticism. But in this they confessed its efficacy, as the pagan and the philosopher saw. In modern times some have objected to criticism on the ground that it is negative: that it pulls down without building up. This is not correct. The full criticism of the false commonly indicates the true, or is the means of eliciting that which is true by the controversy which it provokes. Now, not a theological book is published, not a sermon is delivered, without the fear of the critic being before the eyes of the writer or the preacher. Even those who trade on the name of Christ do it much more cautiously than heretofore, and our stock-writers who use Christianity as a figure of rhetoric, profess only vague faith, and are afraid of announcing their creed, so that their religion becomes comparatively harmless by being obliged to be indefinite. Thus those who hold that criticism builds up nothing, overlook the fact that it makes other people do it in spite of themselves—for the neutralisation of positive error is the introduction of positive truth.

* Romans xvi. 17. † Galatians i. 9. ‡ Titus i. 10-13.

Digitized by Google

§2. Thus criticism, as a power and a service, is easily vindicated against such of the rationalists as, of late years, have taken to deprecating it. There are a class of philosophical radicals so refined as never to have a clear purpose, so fastidious as never to work; so there are a class of philosophical rationalists so liberal as never to have an opinion, and who seem to live on good terms with both right and wrong—too well bred to make a proselyte or say an unkind thing to a public error: properly anxious not to wound individual feeling, they play round the angles of an argument as though they were afraid of hurting *that*. The answer to these objectors to discussion is easy. They will give in to us if we can succeed in setting a better example than some of our predecessors—that is, if we can lay down rules for creating vigour of refutation without diffusing ill feeling around, which rules we believe are possible to frame and possible to follow.

§3. The clergy, however, are made of very different material from the rationalists, and are under very different influences in the course they take. The clergy avoid religious discussion for six principal causes.

I. They avoid it because they consider religious truth so obvious as not to need discussion, or so sacred as to be profaned by it.*

II. They avoid discussion through fear of giving their opponent, or their opponent's cause, importance or advantage.

III. They avoid it through dread of being outraged in it.

IV. They avoid it because they do not know how to control it.

V. They avoid it because they fear it.

VI. They avoid it because they do not generally understand it as an Art.

* The substance of this paragraph is often avowed—so is the substance of paragraph III.—as reasons for avoiding controversy by the clergy. Paragraphs II., IV., V., and VI. describe impressions under which they consciously or unconsciously labour, and constitute their private—reasons for discountenancing debate.

Digitized by Google

§4. There are some subtle impressions, some personal ones, some hidden ones, besides these that I have enumerated, which prevent particular individuals from entering into, or countenancing, religious discussion. But I believe the principal causes are included under the heads specified ; at least, all that I have discovered as strongly operative, during twelve years of observation of the clergy, are referable to these six classes.

No gentleman can be considered as bound to debate if he has not time, or means, or strength, or if he is challenged by a person of doubtful character or of manifest incompetence. These cases afford special justifiable reasons for declining discussion. But those who allege such reasons virtually express a willingness to debate, if what they consider proper conditions existed ; they virtually concede the legitimacy of controversy itself. In this book I have chiefly in view those who *disbelieve* in the good of controversy, and decline it as a general rule—who *discountenance controversy altogether*, and *discourage* it in others to whom suitable opponents offer, and who *are* endowed both with the temper and the means to conduct controversy for the service of truth.

The reader is not to understand me as assuming that every one who avoids controversy does so for *all* the six causes assigned, but that those who discourage and discountenance it are much influenced by one or other of these causes.

The term "Clergy," for the sake of convenience, I use in the comprehensive sense of signifying the Catholic priest, the pastors of the Established Church, and of the Dissenting and Presbyterian Congregations.

The frequent references to the *Reasoner* in the following pages require explanation. It will be found that the illustrations cited are probably of some facts not elsewhere recorded, or to some reprint not elsewhere so accessible. To give the name of provincial newspapers, which the reader could not procure at this date, would be no reference at all. At the risk of the appearance of literary egotism, reference is given to pages where the reprints may be found more readily.

Digitized by Google

PART I.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

DISCUSSION HELD TO BE NEEDLESS AND PROFANE.

Reason I.—*Discussion is avoided because religious truths are considered so obvious as not to need it, or so sacred as to be profaned by it.*

§1. With respect to discussion, Roman Catholics are thorough-going Dissenters, strict Puritans, inflexible Nonconformists. All men have their anarchies and antipathies, and refusal of discussion is the rebellious point with Roman Catholics. Indeed, actual debate is rarely, if ever, obtained with them. They can scarcely be said to make any pretension to discuss their views. Regarding that God *has* spoken, and holding that the Church has attested it, they affirm that there is no further ground for dispute. They consider discussion as useless and presumptuous —as unnecessary and profane. In cases which have come under my notice, in which they have taken part in debate, they have rather declaimed against their opponents than argued with them. Even with believers they hold controversy as a matter of condescension rather than as a rule or a right.*

§2. Many Protestants also eschew discussion. Assuming the truths of religion to be the subject of intuition, and therefore truisms; or to be matters of faith, and therefore incommunicable by reason—they plead the inutility of having recourse to it. Again, others hold that religion, being the creature of revelation, it is divine, and too sacred to be profaned by being made the subject of logical disquisition. All this would be very well, if these reasoners against reason would maintain a consistent silence, and not require other people to become convinced of what cannot be made convincing.

§3. Preachers, however, who entertain the objections described, are not formidable. None propagate very effectively what they believe cannot be propounded, and no one is bound to attend to that advocate who does not profess to explain his opinions.

* See "End of Controversy," by Bishop Milner.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THE DREAD OF GIVING OPPONENTS IMPORTANCE.

Reason II.—*The Clergy avoid Discussion lest they should give an opponent importance, or his cause an advantage.*

§1. What if the Christian should give his opponent importance? Is it more than might be expected from the Christian, whose fair attribute, we are told, is humility, and who would rejoice to find that he had been the cause of another's advantage? But let those who think that the common profession of brotherly love has always to do with Christian practice hasten to correct the delusion. If we should get personal importance through the honour the Christian conferred upon us, should not even that the more delight one who tells us that his religion is to do good and perform daily kindnesses to all men? If an opponent should attain to new public estimation, should a Christian therefore be envious? To be jealous of another's advancement would be considered meanness, if the feeling were connected with any subject not religious.

§2. This reluctance to give opponents importance, so widely manifested by the clergy, is groundless. To show them that such a feeling is ungenerous will not be without effect, but probably less operative than to show them that it is without foundation, or that it implies an admission that the opponent cause is the stronger. We cannot get importance in debate if we are in the wrong—we can only provoke the exposure of our weakness and our error; and the jealousy of us implies, on the part of any who show it, a misconception of the whole matter, or a secret consciousness that we may be in the right, and may present the stronger case. We defy *them* to get importance in their controversies with us because we believe them to be in the wrong. They who have the weaker cause can rush upon their ruin in no way so effectually as by provoking debate, which brings out their weakness in fatal contrast with the strength of the truth.

§3. This conviction is so universal, that every body avoids debate who does not see his way clear. He regards discussion as an impertinence if thrust upon him, just as a man avoids a quarrel with an enemy able to defeat him. While, on the contrary, all men who feel that they have important truths to establish, and have a strong case to present, are just as eager for

Digitized by Google

debate as other people are to avoid it. I never knew an earnest man, who felt himself to be clearly in the right, who did not, above all things, seek the opportunity of controversy. And so do most of the clergy on certain points of doctrinal view and historical evidence: on questions of miracle and prophecy, where they think they have the advantage. I have found them eager and even rude in pressing discussion upon incompetent opponents. On such occasions they are as ready to justify controversy as I am. From which I learn that all men (time, health, and suitable opponents offering) accept debate when they feel that they are in the right, and only decline it when improperly offered, or when they lack earnestness, or a clear and a defensible case.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

APPREHENSION OF OUTRAGE.

Reason III.—*The Clergy avoid Discussion through apprehension of being outraged in it.*

§1. We readily grant that the clergy, often gentlemen by birth as well as by education, must feel reluctance to meet men of uncultivated and gross natures; and it can be only a strong feeling of duty or benevolence, like that which takes the Catholic priest into the hut of the outcast, which can induce them to submit to a contact naturally repugnant.

§2. We, however, hope want of courtesy is not the failing of "our people only." Those who object to debate with us on the supposition that it is, must remember that such persons are *not* altogether confined to our side. Is there anything more offensive recorded in the book of controversy than the conduct of the Rev. George Redford, D.D., who blew his nose in Robert Owen's face, in the Town Hall in Worcester? Surely a man more coarse in manner or gross in thought than John Brindley, the *protégé* of the Bishop of Chester, does not belong to us? I several times rose under intense disgust when debating with the Rev. George Montgomery West, in the Town Hall of Ashton-under-Lyne. I found John Bowes a sort of moral rhinoceros, through whose thick ethical epidermus no reproof could pierce. The first time of my meeting the Rev. James Fleming, of Lancaster, my dislike of the task was such, that nothing would have induced me to submit to it but a sense of duty. Addressing the audience an

Digitized by Google

that occasion, I said—"Gentlemen, you desire to know the reasons which induce me to reject Christianity. Well, there is one which I confess amounts to a prejudice: it is, that Christianity teaches bad manners. Though invited to Lancaster by the Rev. Mr. Fleming himself, the *Lancaster Gazette* represents me as holding my opinions in the 'accursed pride of my heart;' and even the Rev. Mr. Fleming adds his own imputations in the *Lancaster Guardian*, and causes tracts to be distributed at the entrance to my lecture room, painting me, by implication, as a 'servant of corruption,' as one 'lying in wait to deceive,' and much more of the same kind. The Religious Tract Society of London—that repertory of sacred calumny of non-believers, ever abounding in scriptural justification of its unmeasured rudeness—is put into requisition, and from that my opponent borrows ungracious aid."* We have more to endure from Christians than they have from us. We have no inspired canons of imputation to justify us in bad taste. If we thus forget ourselves, we fall at once in our own esteem and in public estimation, while in the Christian it is accounted holy zeal. Neither in the strife of parliamentary contests, nor in the lower-toned political contests of the provinces, could any man preserve the character of a gentleman and indulge in the imputations which are employed by the clergy in the cause of God. Nor is such offence as comes by the nature of the doctrine stated, confined to our side. A Christian supposes that his feelings alone are outraged. He forgets that we are often as much outraged by the doctrines he expresses as he possibly can be by those we express.

§3. But suppose that the Christian is alone the sufferer, that is hardly a reason why he should refuse us discussion. If his own account be true as to the danger we are in, it surely becomes him to dare a little for the safety of our souls. Though he might haply pluck us as brands from the eternal burning, yet he stands on the small punctilio of personal agreeableness, and with his arms folded—while we perish. We smile at that gentleman who, when one whom he had met at a party fell into a river and cried out for help, walked on and left him to drown, on the plea that he had never been introduced to him, and that it was a breach of politeness to interfere where that ceremony had not been observed. Did the clergy seriously believe that we were in the danger their creeds say we are, it is not in human nature that they should stand idly by while we totter on so great a precipice. We have

* *Vide Reasoners* Nos. 262-4. Articles: "Defence of Opinion against the Clergy of Lancaster."

Digitized by Google

yet another glimpse of the unrealness of their doctrine in the supine fastidiousness of its advocates—a fastidiousness impossible with any having a clear sense of their professed principles and our consequent danger.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

DISCUSSION CONSIDERED INCONTROLLABLE.

Reason IV.—*The Clergy avoid Discussion because they do not know how to control it.*

§1. It is a frequent complaint of the Christian pastor that the tone of meetings for controversy is unsuited for the discovery of the truth, and often so boisterous as to render its statement impossible. When this is the case it is commonly the fault of the disputants. Two personal requisites are necessary for the peaceable control of discussion:—

I. The respectful bearing of each opponent towards the other.

II. Audacity, such as springs from confidence in the truth, and which the multitude always respect.

§2. Where a Christian falls in with the example of Christ towards his opponents, or of the Apostles with respect to theirs, he is often so rude to his antagonists as to excite the feelings of the audience. Though partizans will often applaud offensive language towards an opponent, the love of fair play in a concourse of people leads them, in the end, to take sides with the one rudely treated, and to resent such rudeness. I never knew an interruption in a discussion where *both* disputants were cool themselves and courteous to each other; and disputants who cannot be cool and courteous to each other ought never to meet.

§3. Even in the wildest seasons of revolutionary excitement, he most securely rides the storm who has audacity. The multitude, which fails to understand principles, has always about it the instinct of heroism, and yields its obedience to him who has the most daring. He who has that confidence in the truth of his views that he can dare the judgment of his audience, will always be able to control them. To be at once strictly just and strictly respectful towards opponents, and be utterly without fear of what any man can say *of* you or *to* you, and to strive to make some distinct additions to the knowledge of the public, must always create an atmosphere about a debator which discord cannot breathe.

Digitized by Google

§4. With fewer defences than these I have appeared without apprehension before the most excited audiences, and have passed unhurt from among them, sustained by the simple confidence that there could not well be a quarrel unless there were two parties to it—and I was not going to make one. Some experience has shown me that the rudest people—even those hired to make a disturbance—always wait for a pretext. Not even the coarsest natures can rush at once into rudeness and violence in the presence of the public without any provocation. There is a comfortable truth in the story of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair, who drew his coat after him, begging some "jintleman" to do him the favour of treading upon it, that he might have cause of quarrel with him. The merest spark will ignite gunpowder, but even gunpowder will not ignite without the spark. Keep the spark of provocation away, and you may sit down with safety on a powder magazine, even though it be one of religious controversy—certainly an aggregation of the most inflammable materials known to exist.

§5. Two intellectual rules may also be observed with advantage for controlling controversy:—

I. Let the subject be one that comes within the compass of the common understanding.

II. Or: one that relates to the cultivation of the feelings.

§6. If a subject does not come within the range of the popular understanding, it belongs to the philosopher's closet, and the reputation of public controversy ought not to be perilled upon it. The reason for insisting that a subject be popularly apprehensible is, that what a multitude can understand they take an interest in, and interest commands their attention, and leaves them no time to think of interruption. When interest flags uneasiness begins. Not only "idle hands," but idle heads, soon find mischief to do.

§7. In an exordium to a discourse every word must be chosen—simple—direct—leading through the subject. A term of double meaning perplexes the hearer—an obscure term plunges him into a mystery. Thus the word of anger or imputation diverts attention. It is like pronouncing Aldiborontiphoskyphornyostikos in the opening of a speech. Before the audience make it out they have lost twenty sentences which succeeded it, and they rarely care to follow the speaker after they have lost the thread of the discourse, and they are discouraged from further close attention.

§8. But I attach more importance to the question having relation to the cultivation of the feelings. In religious controversies, if the disputants have in view to display their learning,

Digitized by Google

to disparage each other, to win a victory rather than to establish the truth, it is indeed a sight to make one mourn. If the hearers grow no wiser, or kinder, or healthier, we have but a dreary spectacle of moral barrenness. Questions therefore having a *moral* element in them, are to be preferred. Learning is an acquirement which comes unequally to men, but moral feeling is an inheritance, which always exists as healthily among the poor as the rich, and can always be appealed to; and whoever aims seriously and evidently at its expansion and cultivation can obtain an instantaneous truce with riot, and can command the peace and esteem of his audience if not their conviction.

§9. Of the class of questions of doubtful utility are those relating to the Historical Evidences of Christianity, and the inspiration and Interpretations of Scripture. What understanding can the common people have of these matters which are the province of the scholar, who alone is a match for churches, divines, translators, and grammarians? The educated priest who can devote his whole time to the study, and have access to the best libraries, can excel in accuracy the unscholastic artizan, and overwhelm by multiplied examples the few cases his poor leisure and poorer learning enable him to collect. But upon the ground of morality the disparity is diminished. The artizan and the priest stand upon a common level, and appeal to a common nature. The reference to the human heart is less difficult and less uncertain than the reference to the "Fathers." Experience is not the sole property of the ecclesiastic, but belongs to the mechanic as well as the minister; and as, in questions of morality, the point to be determined in not what is ordered, but what ought to be—not what is written, but what is right—both are equally capable of judging. And if these differences were always faithfully and fairly tried in the court of conscience, we should oftener hear of coincidences of opinion than we now do; controversy would no longer be regarded as a cavil—as a longdrawn wrangle of words, words, words—as a conflict where the public lose time, the disputants temper, and truth respect.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

DISCUSSION IS FEARED.

Reason V.—*The Clergy avoid Discussion because they fear it.*

§1. Freethinkers are accustomed to call themselves by the name of *Free* inquirers. I wish this was not a name that they alone can arrogate. Sometimes Christians say they also are *Free* inquirers. But it is not true: certainly not true of the large family of orthodox Christians. They who dispute it ever find me ready to put it to practical proof.

§2. One night at Bingley an opponent took this ground. He said *he* was a *free* inquirer, as free as I was. "Well, let us see," I answered; "I shall be glad to find it so. We read the ablest books the Christian press issues. Does the Christian read the ablest books on the Freethinking side? Our lecturers recommend their audiences to read the ablest Christian books: does the Christian minister recommend his flock to do the same with respect to us?" My opponent was obliged to confess he never heard them give the advice we give. Next I observed that we went to hear the ablest preachers we could find, especially when they treated on controversial topics—and we advise our friends to visit all churches or chapels for the same purpose. I demanded to be informed whether Christian ministers attended, with the same readiness, freethinking or atheistical lectures, or advised their hearers to do it. My opponent was silent. But I added—"It may not be fair to condemn you for the short-comings of your friends. You may differ from them. As you tell us you are *as free* an inquirer as I am, give us your own proof of it. *That* is possible to you. You have heard me say that we do not value those adherents who are of our side only—such may be taken from us to-morrow, when they shall hear the other side. We want those only who *know* both sides; who have examined *both* sides; and who are with us because they prefer our side. We want not adherents of faith or ignorance, of prejudice, antagonism, or mere partizanship; we seek the adherents of *conviction*. Besides a man's future may depend on the faith of his life. We would not, therefore, incur the responsibility of encouraging a man to stand on our side till he has sought out all accessible sides, and, in unbiassed hour, selected that which seems to offer to him the greatest safety. We would

Digitized by Google

not incur the criminality the priest incurs of encouraging a man to abide by established or other proferred opinions, and discourage that wise examination of all accessible opinions, and so prevent him from finding more light and safety elsewhere. We therefore say to all our friends—'Read and hear the other side; you ought to do so—it is your duty. It is our duty to tell you, and your interest to read, the able Christian author, and hear the able Christian minister.' Will you *now* say the same to your friends?" My opponent paused. Upon my saying "it became him to do it now," he hesitatingly said, "They *might*." "That will not do," I rejoined; "they stand around you, and you must say to them, 'you *ought*—not they *may*, but they *must*.'" With very ill grace, he said—"They *ought* and they *must*." But I further urged—"That is not an equivalent to what I have said. To make good your assertion that you are *as free* an inquirer as I am, you must say after me: 'Christian friends, it is your *duty* to read freethinking books and to hear freethinking lectures, that you may be able to judge both sides in fairness and truth.'" He was true to his profession and he said it; but I never saw Christians appear more astonished than did his friends as they looked up at their class-leader as he gave them this unprecedented advice. And, to tell the truth, the man seemed as astonished at himself as his hearers at him.

§3. Since this occurred, we have made a progress not then to be foreseen. In the Assembly Rooms in Nottingham, the Rev. T. Collisson, B.A., curate of New Radford, in answer to a similar question put by me, said he saw no impropriety in Christians reading our books and hearing our accredited statements; and, when pressed to be more explicit, he answered—audibly, frankly, and without hesitation—that it was their *duty* to do it. This was said to a large audience of ladies and gentlemen of various Christian congregations. Repeated in every town, as I trust it will be, rationalist assemblies will be legitimatised, and the reading of freethinking works be a recognised branch of a well-informed Christian education. *When* this is the case, none will be more ready to admit than the present writer, that the clergy have ceased to fear discussion.

The Rev. William Blandy, of Chesterfield (now of the Established Church), and the Rev. Solomon Gompertz, of Chalford, burned the "Logic of Death." In several Mechanics' Institutions and Reading Rooms the same distinction has been conferred upon the *Reasoner*. Why do the clergy act thus if they do not fear controversy? It was said by one of old—"O that mine enemy would write a book." And certainly no man can

Digitized by Google

put himself at the mercy of his enemies so effectually as when he writes a book, if the book be a weak or bad one. When the clergy write a bad book, I quote it against them continually, and not without effect; and I do not willingly let it die till they produce a better. If they do not always take this course against us, it must be because they do not always find our books capable of being quoted against us, and that to burn them is easier than to answer them.

§4. Never desiring to impute anything to the clergy which is disparaging to them, I have reluctance in saying they fear discussion. Many of them are brave and fearless in all respects, and challenge admiration. But these are the exceptions. While, as in Carlisle, the newspapers seek to buy the agreement of the working classes to exclude the works of Paine and others from their libraries by offering them £100*—while the Directors of Mechanics' Institutions and Literary Institutions all over the kingdom exclude books on our side from their libraries, and our lecturers from their platforms, and admit the religious book, however offensive, and the clergyman, however rude and bigoted —we have a right to say that there exists a wide fear of discussion among Christians.

§5. Dr. Kalley, who was imprisoned for blasphemy at Madeira because he taught the insufficiency of the grounds for believing in four Gods, at the same time that we were imprisoned at home for teaching the insufficiency of the grounds for believing in any, after his liberation called upon me, and explained, during two hours, a case of prophecy which he deemed eminently conclusive. When he had done he asked, "Did I believe in its force?" I answered, "Did he believe it himself?" "Of course he did." Then I proposed this proof of it. I would publish his argument in the *Movement*, so that it might be operative not only on myself, but upon our readers also.

The Doctor declined, on the ground that something that I might say in reference to it would destroy its efficacy in their eyes. It was in vain that I proposed, as in the case of Mr. William Howitt's Letter,† to omit in that number all antagonistic matter. What reliance, then, I urged, ought I to place on an argument upon which Dr. Kalley placed so little reliance himself? I assured Dr. K. that if he would allow me but one quarter of a column weekly of the Scotch *Witness*, broad-sheet newspaper, that I would shake the faith of half their readers, put in what else they pleased in all other portions of the paper. The Doctor de-

* *Vide Reasoner.* † Inserted in *Reasoner* No. 14.

Digitized by Google

clined to procure me the opportunity. It is not too much to conclude that there is an utter distrust of discussion evidenced in all this.

§6. In making statements of this nature, I have sometimes been checked in a manner that induced me for a season to think I might be in the wrong, but experience has restored my conviction again. For instance, one Sunday evening, a gentleman arose on the platform in Newcastle-on-Tyne, on which I had spoken on this subject, and informed the audience, with the air of a herald, that he had a challenge to give. An accredited minister of religion was present who would debate with me, and vindicate Christianity against all objections. The Rev. J. H. Rutherford then came forward, and avowed his readiness to hold *ten* nights' debate. Indeed, his eagerness was indecent, for he imputed to me want of courage because my engagements did not permit me to commence the very *next* night. There was an air of chivalry about this young soldier of the cross which elicited my admiration, and I expressed it in no niggard terms. This gentleman, his herald, and his congregation accepted this credit; but to this day the Rev. Mr. Rutherford has never fulfilled his pledge.*

§7. On the same night, there stepped on the platform a venerable champion of the truth, the Rev. Mr. Green. His hair was grey and his voice paternal. He commenced, in a voice at once of contempt and authority, by announcing that "he, for one, was not afraid of discussion." The audience were in a commotion of applause. It seemed as though the church had put on its armour, and was going to vindicate its claims with the spirit of its ancient sons. Mr. Green went so far as to dictate himself to the chairman the terms of his challenge. But the old hero, like the young champion, accepted the applause offered to his courage, but never after came into the field.† Animated by the cheers which greeted so cordially all who manifested so much resolution, the Young Men's Christian Association came forward and challenged debate on their part, and Mr. Stringer registered their intention amid the approbation of the meeting. But neither the pride of the young men, any more than the honour of the old, seems to have been real, for they also have declined to fulfil their own pledge. The Rev. Dr. Kerns, of Sheffield, is a more distinguished instance of the same kind of defalcation under other circumstances.‡

§8. We can clear ourselves of a reproach often made to me,

* *Reasoners*, No. 210, p. 98; No. 247, p. 325.
† *Reasoner*, No. 210, p. 98.
‡ *Vide Reasoners*, Nos. 257, p. 448; No. 263, p. 60.

Digitized by Google

namely, that we have robbed the Christian of his faith—that *we* have taken Christianity away. *We* have not taken Christianity away. It takes itself away. It conceals itself almost universally. It comes out in the pulpit, where no man may reply—it is bold in the newspaper, where an opponent cannot be heard—it is ostentatious in a mechanics' institution, where theological discussion is forbidden to all but the dominant party—it is loud on platforms, where policemen are at call to put down questioners as interrupters—it is boastful in high places, while penal statutes exist to curtail the freedom of the disbeliever; and on the bed of death, where human strength is exhausted, on the side of the grave, where anguish leaves the mourner prostrate—there we know how insolent and triumphant is its bearing. But in the theatre of *fair* and *open* encounter, where art and science brave inquiry and dare dissent, there the church hides its craven head.

§9. Discussion is the great test of truth. No truth can be regarded as established, says an eminent metaphysician, which is not universally accepted, after it has been universally examined in a fair field of inquiry. Theology has no such truths as these. There never has been a fair field of inquiry. The penal statutes of England forbid it among us, and the influence of the clergy prevents it where the law is silent. If only from kindness to mankind the clergy ought to promote the freest discussion, seeing that men, on their own showing, may incur everlasting penalties through erroneous belief. They ought therefore to strive for unlimited debate, as the highest protection against the most momentous delusions.

§10. Against the causalty of fire in our dwellings we are protected by Insurance Societies. If against the more fearful contingency of eternal fire, the clergy could protect us in a similar manner, they might be justified in deprecating debate. If they could establish an Everlasting Fire Insurance Society, with *indisputable* policies and at moderate premiums, so moderate that the poor man could pay them—then I say that all of us, who were too timid, too ignorant, or too idle to think for ourselves, might make a fair bargain with the clergy, and believe in security as they would have us. But since they cannot, or do not thus insure us, we cannot bow to their authority except at our own peril.

§11. In vain they recite to us the names of the great who have believed with them. The Pagan, the Budhist, the Mahommedan, the Catholic, can do the same. What matters it to us what Newton believed, or that the majority of all ages are against us? Unless Newton will answer for us we cannot accept Newton's faith. Unless the world will take our place at the bar of

Digitized by Google

God, to which we are referred, we cannot believe as the world believes. If men were wise, if they understood their own interests, the clergy who absolutely refused debate would in that day forfeit their own influence. This truth would be blazoned on our walls as a warning to all—MEN! BEWARE HOW YOU TRUST YOUR ETERNAL INTERESTS TO THOSE MEN WHO DARE NOT TRUST THEIR PRINCIPLES TO PUBLIC DISCUSSION.

§12. Discussion is but another form of cross-examination. For the partizan of an opinion to refuse to submit to this is to confess to conscious guilt; and when we remember that the existence of God is the great problem of theology, to refuse discussion upon it is to treat that sublime hypothesis as though it were a thief wh refused to be searched—is to invite men to regard it as an impostor whose credentials will not bear examination. Verily the clergy would blush were they to see the matter in this light on discovering how they betray the honour of God.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

DISCUSSION NOT UNDERSTOOD.

Reason VI.—*The Clergy avoid [illegible]ussion because they do not generally understand [illegible]sults.*

with

§1. That the public may come to value discussion, it is necessary to furnish some better explanation of it than priests, than the weak, the timid, the indolent, and the incapable render of it. We may adopt as the definition of it what Dr. Johnson said of oratory—it is the art by which you beat down your adversary's arguments and put *better* in their places.

§2. Just as Democracy is the Anarchy of Politics—a salutary, anarchy, leading to a liberty founded on intelligence—so Private Judgment is the Anarchy of Opinion, leading to settled principles founded on reason. "Hold up facts," exclaims Emerson, "in the true order of thought, and he who sees them can never go back." Controversy, by a knowledge of which, says Milton, "every learned man hath profited," best discovers to us this order—and Controversy, when oral, has the merit of putting into the hands of the multitude the advantages which are enjoyed by the learned. He who is a judge is one selected because wise enough to insist upon knowing both sides, patient enough to hear them fully, impartial enough to weigh them fairly, clear-sighted enough to dis-

Digitized by Google

tinguish the value of diverse evidence, coherent enough to classify it, strong enough to take the side of justice, and courageous enough to declare in favour of the truth. The union of all these qualities is scarce even at the bar—the highest of the learned professions— and can never be expected in the occasional audience. But in controversy the qualities are forced out into unconscious play in the antagonism of the disputants, who do the work of the judge in their contest; and the people who watch the process are enabled to distinguish between truths and errors they never could have brought into such contrast themselves.

Discussion is a discipline to both speakers and hearers. The argument against it, that it sometimes leads to strife and discord, is the very reason why it should be practised. Men are childish intellectually, while in that state in which debate must be prohibited. If they be children, train them in the art of debate until they are translated into men.

On this question we may borrow a few words from another place.

§3. "By discussion a twofold reality is brought to bear on the public understanding, more exciting than that of any other intellectual agency. An opinion that is worth holding is worth diffusing, and to be diffused it must be thought about; and when men think on true principles they become adherents—but only those adherents are worth [illegible]g who have thought on *both sides*, and discussion alone [illegible] the [illegible]em do that well. True, men may *read* on both sides; [illegible]t it seldom happens that men who are impressed by one side *care* to read the other. In discussions they are *obliged* to hear both sides. In an oral debate, the adaptation of fact to fact is complete—the *pro* and *con.* are heard successively, the light of contrast is full and clear, and both sides are weighed at the time when the eye is sharply fixed on the balance. It matters not whether the disputants argue for victory or truth. If they are intellectual gladiators so much the better. The stronger they are, the mightier the battle, and the more instructive the conflict.

§4. "It is said that people come out of such discussions as they go into them, that the same partisans shout or hiss on the same side all through. This is not always true, and no matter if it is. The work of conviction is often done, though the audience may not show it. They may break your head, and afterwards own you were right. Human pride forbids the confession, but change is effected in spite of pride. And if an audience remain the same at night, they will not be the same the next morning. Prefer that conviction which is *begun* in discussion, not *ended*

Digitized by Google

there. He who hastily changes is to be suspected of weakness, or carelessness. The steady and deliberate thinker, who takes time to consider, is the safest convert.

§5. "Debate should never be held for the sake of debating. It lowers the character of debate. The value of free speech is too great to be trifled with. Let conflict be sought only with sincere men. To the opponent let the first word and the last be conceded. Let him appoint the chairman. Let him speak double time if he desires it. Debate is objected to as an exhibition in which disputants try to surprise, outwit, take advantage of, and discomfit each other. To obviate this objection, explain to your opponent the outline of the course you intend to pursue, acquaint him with the books you shall quote, the authorities you shall cite, the propositions you shall endeavour to prove, and the concessions you shall demand. And do this without expecting the same at his hands. He will not now be taken by surprise. He will be pre-warned and pre-armed. He will have time to prepare, and if the truth is in him it ought to come out.

"If you feel that you cannot give all these advantages to your opponent, suspect yourself and suspect your side of the question. Every conscientious and decided man believes his views to be true, and if consistent he believes them to be impregnable. Neither in minutes, months, nor years are they to be refuted. Then a man so persuaded may despise petty advantages, and enable his opponent to arm himself beforehand.

"In another particular, discussions are esteemed unsatisfactory. When statement and reply have been made, then comes the reply to the reply, and then the reply to that, till the cavil seems endless, perplexing, and tiresome.

§6. "Now the object of discussion is not the vexatious chase of an opponent, but the contrastive and current statement of opinion. Therefore endeavour to select leading opinions, to state them strongly and clearly, and when your opponent replies, be content to leave his arguments side by side with your own, for the judgment of the auditors. In no case disparage an opponent, misstate his views, or torture his words, and thus, for the sake of a verbal triumph, produce lasting ill feeling. Your sole business is with *what* he says, not *how* he says it, nor *why* he says it. Your aim should be that the audience should lose sight of the speakers, and be possessed with the subject—and that those who come the partisans of persons shall depart the partisans of principles. The victory in a debate lies not in lowering an opponent, but in raising the subject in public estimation. Controversial

Digitized by Google

wisdom lies not in destroying an opponent, but his error—not in making him ridiculous so much as in making the audience wise.

"Debate requires self-possession—a power to think on your legs. But even in debate, the victory is oftener with the foregone than with the impromptu thinker. A man who knows his subject well will be forearmed. He alone can distinctly see the points in dispute, and the nature of the proof or disproof necessary to settle the question.

§7. "At the threshold of controversy it is well to define all leading terms, which should never be used in any other than the settled sense. A common standard of appeal should be agreed upon. The question at issue should be stated so clearly that it cannot possibly be misunderstood. No opponent should be accepted whose sincerity you cannot assume, as it must never be questioned in debate. Find no fault with his grammar, manner, intentions, tone, whatever may be the provocation. Attend only to the matter. Hear all things without impatience and without emotion. Let your opponent fully exhaust his matter. Encourage him to say whatever he thinks relevant. Many persons believe in the magnitude of their positions, because they have never been permitted to state them to others—and when they have once delivered themselves of their opinions, they often find for the first time how insignificant they are. There are some persons whom no body can confute but themselves. When you distinguish such, your proper business is to let them do it. Learn to satisfy yourself and to present a conclusive statement of your opinions, and when you have done so, have the courage to abide by it. If you cannot trust your statement to be canvassed by others—if you feel anxious to add some additional remark at every step—if reply from your opponent begets reply from you, suspect your knowledge of your own case and withdraw it for future reflection. Master as completely as you can your opponent's theories, and state his case with the greatest fairness, and, if possible, state it with more force against yourself than your opponent can. The observance of this rule will teach you two things—your opponent's strength or weakness, and your own also. If you *cannot* state your opponent's case you do not know it, and if you do not know it you are not in a fit state to argue against it. If you *dare not* state your opponent's case in its greatest force, you feel it to be stronger than your own, and you *ought not* to argue against it."*

* *Vide* "Public Speaking and Debate," c. xx., pp. 69, 70, where much more on this subject, as a question of Rhetoric, will be found.

Digitized by Google

§8. Objectors to discussion also overlook a fact of the highest importance—the fact that human understanding follows the law of evidence. Now, as the open eye must see whatever comes within the range of its vision—as the open ear must hear whatever sound occurs immediately around it—so the understanding cannot help perceiving whatever facts are set before it, nor help comprehending whatever truth is made plain to it. It is thus that discussion becomes a power, that progress is inevitable wherever discussion is employed upon real questions. Men, whether they will or not, are put under the dominion of new ideas, and, once perceiving the truth, they can never go back to what they were, and will more or less go forward.

§9. In this world, where people will leave you to perish in falsehood lest they should put you to inconvenience by telling you the plain truth, there is no friendship like criticism. The fault-finder, whatever his motive, is worth more to you than all the acquiescent echoers of your errors, who afflict you with their fatal friendship. For myself, I would rather have one strong enemy, able to see my errors, and who would do me the incalculable service to tell me of them, than a hundred weak friends, whose smooth tongues confess to no dissent, and condemn me to perpetual mediocrity. I know of no form of friendship so real as that in which a man risks your good opinion in order to tell you of a fault—and my experience tells me that there is no friendship so scarce.

§10. Most of the people who disparage discussion as a means of eliciting truth do so because it has failed in their hands through their incapacity, or because it has perhaps gone against them. We must expect such persons to think ill of it. Few who have conducted it with judgment on the side of truth ever had reason to regret the issue. True, as Mirabeau said, "you may as well put an issue in a wooden leg as attempt to inform some understandings"—but even that greatly depends on the way you go about it. Few persons can reason many minutes together consecutively—and the want of tact on the part of their opponents feeds them with matter for digression. Let a disputant look well to the selection of his leading terms, that they be such as shall provoke argument instead of anger. Withhold excitement, and no passion can long subsist on itself. If an opponent be foolish or false, so much the worse for him. If he wants consecutiveness, so much the worse for his cause. Such a man can only live on interruption or digressive matter. One who is not interrupted must draw upon his own resources, and if he have no resources he must give over. I have often seen such a

Digitized by Google

one on the point of utter exhaustion, when some idle personality enabled the dying orator to revive. He caught at the noisy straw, and went on for a quarter of an hour amid applause bestowed upon him for things said which had no relation whatever to the subject. A vacant disputant loves your interruptors—they supply to him life, cheers, and fury. The waste of time which thus ensues is estimated as the discredit of controversy, whereas it is properly the discredit of the controversialists who do not understand what they are about.

§11. In the Northampton discussion in 1846, I first observed, to any practical purpose, how every Christian could sharply see the errors of his neighbours' faith, but not his own. After that time I disused generalised censure, by which some one was sure to be offended at an improper time, and perhaps wronged. To obviate this I made a classification of Christian types, and took only one at a time. The result was that when class No. 6 was being discussed (I divided them into six classes) the five other types looked on in peace. When No. 5 was on the tapis, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 were content; so that at one time the minority of one type was all that had occasion to manifest dissent. The effect of this method in reaching the understandings of others was expressed thus one night by an opponent—"Oh, its nae use arg'ing wie him, he *sorts* the proofs."

§12. Discussion refused to us brings with it another advantage of great importance. Our opponents neither know our strength nor our weakness, and they are compelled to fight us in the dark. Ignorant of our intrenchments, they waste their efforts or wound themselves more than us. We can defy them in many respects, because they do not know us, and this advantage we shall long possess because they *will* not know us. Should they speak of us the truth, it must be by *accident* the public are aware of this, and do not trust them. They will not buy our books lest they should help our cause. They fear to seek the means of counteracting us lest they should help us.

§13. It is common to hear a Christian say when asked to come to our lectures, "no, I will not pay twopence to hear their lectures, it only aids them." For myself I seldom hear a remark from them which encourages me so much. If the twopence they may pay to hear us will, in their opinion, aid us more than they can oppose us by the knowledge they may obtain of our principles and position, we see what a low estimate they themselves make of their opposition. Surely we need not be dismayed at an opposition which is not worth twopence upon their own showing. More than undismayed, we are emboldened. We can accuse the Christian

Digitized by Google

of being unjust to us. He will not procure our books lest his buying them should help to spread them. He will not hear us lest his twopence should aid us. Yet he professes to judge us while he dare not and will not know us.

§14. Maccall usefully observes that the martyr-spirit is most needed when the opposition which makes the martyr sleeps. In like manner, could we but see it, that is the time, when discussion is denied us, when we ought to make the largest advances. When the enemy conceals itself it cannot draw away the public. The public is the property of no sect. We can approach the people, and if we are active, and have an attractive case to present, we can attract them. And to be left in undisputed possession of the field is an immense advantage, if we know how to use it. To be able to speak words which no Minister *does* contradict, and which he apparently dares not cantradict, is, in the estimation of the public, to speak *unanswerable* words.

§15. Never fear that the clergy will debate with us. They will offer debate when it is too late. So clearly do I see this that I no longer ask them to do it. When I used to do it, with great deference, they treated the request with neglect or answered it by calumny, saying that we sought it for vanity or for pence. Then it became us to keep silence, and to take the resolution of making it *impossible* that they should keep silence. And the *Ayr Observer* has confessed that in Scotland the fruit of this course is springing up, where every congregation has young members who trouble the minister with secular questions. For a long period we have used all the means which our being so long unnoticed has enabled us to use with impunity, for putting our views before the young of the provincial churches. Once set thinking, the young will never rest till solution of their doubts is afforded. They apply to the Minister; he suppresses the question. But the lectures delivered publicly, in so many places, strengthen the questioners. The opportunity of discussion offered to their Pastors, which they decline, confirms the suspicions of the young inquirer, and he re-disturbs Zion, and then comes over to us, with whom seems to dwell the unanswerable word. We have the press—we think we have the truth—we have indefatigable allies. It is our fault if we do not succeed. We shall force general discussion in due time, never doubt it. It must come, and the clergy are powerless to hinder it.

§16. Denying the representation that our works were ignored by the Christian pulpits, the Rev. G. A. Syme, of Nottingham, assured me that they were oftener read in the pulpit and reviewed

Digitized by Google

in Christian journals than we were aware of.* If this be so, the improvement is very recent. The orators at missionary meetings, the reports which reach us from the pulpits, the tribes represented by Dr. Cumming and Dr. Campbell, retail all the fanatical anecdotes invented half a century ago. Scarcely a volume published during the last ten years—not even the "Nemesis of Faith," not even "Alton Locke"—gives a portraiture of scepticism possessing a natural lineament. Notwithstanding the warning Archbishop Whately, that Freethinking has changed since it was represented by the wits about town of the last century, the inspiration of the pulpits is still drawn from the religious Toryism of the *Spectator* of Addison, or the death-bed of the profligate Earl of Rochester. Yet this is considered argument in Exeter Hall and by the Religious Tract Society, upon the principle, probably, laid down by O'Connell—that they who aim at nothing are supposed to hit it.

§17. One of the answers delivered with the most confidence by those who personally replied to our invitation to debate, is this—"If a valuable property is left to us, what interest have we in discovering a *flaw* in the will?" But if such objectors suppose it *possible* that debate would end by revealing a flaw in the will in question, it is plain that their confidence in that "will" is not perfect, and that their repose is derived from a determination not to inquire into what may prove a bad case. Had they full confidence in the validity of the will, they would rather themselves challenge scrutiny, that it might be kept above all suspicion—the more especially as the legacy in question is not one bequeathed to our objectors alone, but ostensibly to all mankind. The case, however, against our opponents is stronger than this: they are not called upon to discover a flaw in their will themselves—they are called upon to defend its validity against the flaws that *are* already said to be discovered in it. And this they ought to do for their own sakes if not for ours. If no good feeling towards us prompts them to enter into the inquiry, a sense of their own interest, once reflected upon, ought to lead them to do it.

§18. It is no uncommon thing for a Christian to say why should I discuss principles I know to be pernicious, and thus aid in the publicity of a poison? This is a risk all who seek truth and its

* The Rev. Brewin Grant, of Birmingham, I am bound to say myself, is an instance, as I have heard him read one of our books from the pulpit. Also that the *Bible and the People*, edited by him, gives the freest insertion to opposing views, and has, in some instances, uttered generous words of the writers.

Digitized by Google

establishment must run. If there be "poison" in opinions, it is better that it be exposed, and then it will be neutralised. This objection, moreover, cannot be pressed with respect to speculative opinion, as it would prevent the freethinker from listening to the arguments of any Christian, because such persons may believe that Christianity is "poisonous" of both intellectual independence and well-founded morality. It would prevent all Pagans or Hindoos from listening to our missionaries, as their religious teachers are disposed, like the Mahomedan, the Nepaulese,* and the Brahmin, not to come near the "unclean" Christian.

§19. The constancy with which the Protestant clergy refuse controversy and the Catholic forbid it—saying no good comes of it, it had better be let alone, no body is convinced by it—explains the whole truth to those who have ears to hear. Nobody holds this language who has a strong case, or who sees clear way before him.

* The Nepaulese Ambassador, lately in this country, refused to eat at the Mansion House the food touched by Christians, lest he should be polluted.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

Truth, on these subjects, is militant, and can only establish itself by means of conflict. The most opposite opinions can make a plausible show of evidence while each has the statement of its own case; and it is only possible to ascertain which of them is in the right, after hearing and comparing what each can say against the other, and what the other can urge in its defence.—*John Stuart Mill's Logic*, preface. 3rd ed.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE APPREHENSIONS OF STATESMEN.

§1. Let other people avoid discussion for whatever reason they please, the philosopher should pursue it for reasons of his own. Mind not those who say that error will die out of its own impotence. Pestilence will die out of itself, but the chances are that we shall die out with it. Rather believe that "Error always dies game. It will be long enough lived if we let it alone. The best of remedies is to knock it on the head."* "Truth," says Boulanger, "will make its way to thrones;" and the History of Opinion assures us that Reason is stronger than interest, and more powerful than Passion.

§2. Discussion must come into universal recognition some day. It is the essential means of Rationalism. All sects, however, which walk by Faith, will only befriend it (whatever they may profess of love for it) up to a certain point. As far as their tenets are conformable to reason, they find discussion their ally. Beyond, it is their enemy. The Free Inquirer or the consistent Rationalist, who trusts Reason throughout, is the only permanent friend of free discussion; and as the tendency of intellectual civilisation is that of progress by Reason, Free Discussion must take its place finally as the great ally of progressive Truth.

§3. In the conflict which must come between the party of progress and the party of retrogression, between the Catholic and Protestant principle, desperate passions will come into play. The feud will wear a deadly aspect. When that day comes, men who now are thankless for what we do—who, indeed, denounce us—will acknowledge that we do the state some service by creating an order of young workers, pledged to argument, who accept as their chosen means of progress the principle of reason, and who are taught to contemplate no result but that won by conviction.

§4. It is said that opinion will spread too fast under free discussion, and produce insubordination among the vulgar. Little

* W. J. Fox, M.P.

Digitized by Google

do they know of the matter who talk thus—little do they know of the toil and endurance needed to advance opinion. Ministers of state know well enough that it is not the noisy shout which changes a dynasty. It is not the men who howl their heads off their shoulders that accomplish political or social changes, but the men who keep their heads on. You have to change *character* before you can make the Reformer, and this must be the work of years. The art of organisation is not learned in a day, and it must be learned before opinion can become a power. Do you see no discouragements in the way of this? Go consult our penal statutes. Go ask the Attorney-General—go question the cells of Dorchester, Bristol, Gloucester, and other gaols, and their very echo shall answer you! Go ask the multitude who do not respond to the call of the Reformer till he is in his grave!

Those know nothing of the invulnerability of interest who talk of the too rapid spread of opinion. Where are Bell and Gray, to whom we owe our steam navigation and railroads? The world saw them perish before it owned their services. There is no form of truth which does not make war on the existing interests of error. Neither in medicine, science, commerce, art, philosophy, nor religion, can you move the age to quit its clogs, but it dashes its iron heel against your head for your pains. Make opinion as free as you please, or as you can, and you will then have reason to mourn the slow progress of wisdom among the populace.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

DISCUSSION IN DANGER FROM PHILOSOPHERS.

§1. It would seem that whether a man is right or wrong, he may achieve success in this world if he will choose to say something, and, to borrow Cobbett's phrase, "stick to it." The priests have naturally and necessarily protested against debate. For a long time the world saw through it and disregarded their protest. But by simple reiteration, although answered and rebuked, they have at last overcome the world's patience, or obscured its good sense, and the weak have given in, the strong have been confused, and the philosophers have found an excuse for them all.

§2. The public who have been observant on the matter will not be surprised to hear that a Jesuit, or a Doctrinaire, or any able servant of despotism, might at this day compile one of the most effective books ever issued against Free Discussion, and the

Digitized by Google

Liberty of the Press in general, from the dogmas of Rationalists and declarations of our philosophical liberals. There is no need to be afraid of the Priests—they can be answered; but there is need to be afraid of the Philosophers, whose protest must always have weight in the world unless clearly met.

§3. A dogma of true value, but capable of perverted application, has lately been revived—namely, that society is a *growth* and not a *manufacture*. The inference made from it is, that we should therefore treat men as shrubs or flowers, should cultivate, not force them, but supply them with the conditions of growth and development. This process indeed needs insisting upon as respects the cultivation of positive truth, *when* the seed of such truth is sown. This is the true doctrine of development of national Institutions, and one that carries with it desirable lessons of patience. But it fails when applied to the instillation of new opinion; when, as many have lately, with new confidence, told us, that antagonism of error should therefore be superseded—that it is enough to cultivate the true opinion, and we may keep silence as to what old error it may contradict.

§4. Fascinated by the quietude of this policy, some of the most eminent friends of progress with whom I have at any time conversed have pressed upon me these considerations, as those that ought to change our course. I am not likely to be of opinion that the *mere* inculcation of positive truth, without the application of it to existing error, is the only true course, since it is disproved by our own history. We should be at this hour a very small band of derided dreamers, derided as enthusiasts of impracticable dogmas, incapable of moving men's sympathies at all, had we not adopted a contrastive advocacy of our views. Had we not invoked the public comparison of our principles with received errors in the churches, few would have perceived any practical good in our tenets, and fewer still whould have aided us.

§5. The theory of Intellectual Agriculture now in question suppresses one half of its own truth. He who sows new seed has also the precaution to plough up the ground and prepare it for the sowing. His judgment as to time, mode, and circumstance, is as much displayed here as in subsequent cultivation. Indeed, if the horticulturalist does not take care of the preliminary processes, he has no success at all. Now do not these botanical reformers overlook one half of the truth of their illustration?

The fact is, society needs both processes. The stubble and weeds of error require to be ploughed up, that the seeds of truth may be sown. Christ, from whom modern reformers profess to

Digitized by Google

learn, teaches more practical knowledge in warning men against attempting to gather a harvest on stony and wayside ground.

§6. The doctrine that error is not to be attacked, is the doctrine for the timid, or the supine, or the incapable. Nobody else, it appears to me, thinks of pursuing such a course. Just as all men accept, indeed invoke, controversy, when they feel themselves right enough and strong enough to maintain it, so all bodies of men ardently bent on propagandism tell society of its faults in a loud voice. When would the Reform Bill, such as it was, have been carried had not politicians dwelt on the abuses to be rectified? We may refer to the experience and policy of all societies for Political, Law, Ecclesiastical, or Municipal reform, which have ever made any progress: they all made their only way by ploughing up the errors they wished to extirpate. If they did not point out and define clearly the error to be corrected, or the abuse to be suppressed, no man of business would pay any attention to them, and no Parliamentary Committee would listen to them.

§7. Who pursues this abstinent course in practice? The physician makes a direct attack on disease; the sanitary reformer makes a direct attack on pestilence. Bad habits, bad houses, bad air, bad food, are denounced as pernicious; and why not bad opinions and bad rules of action?

Why is it that the church and the gaol always flourish side by side? Because the positive wisdom in the church makes no attack upon the positive error which creates the gaol. This is the way throughout society; this is the reason that it is so full of anomalies, and life so full of humiliating contradictions. Right and wrong come to think themselves both entitled to a "positive" existence, and modern philosophers do no little to strengthen the delusion.

§8. This whole doctrine rests for its present popularity upon the unconfessed incapacity of our reformers to advocate their opinions contrastively without offence. Because unwise men proceed unwisely, and confound error with the erring—because so few can speak justly, in point of imputation, for the space of ten minutes—because controversy is a bear-garden—controversy is to be put down as philosophically wrong. *Reform controversy*—that is the true remedy. Teach your disputants how to behave themselves, and then you may go on reforming in an open and manly manner, and not by clandestine modes, alike unworthy of ingenuous men and the courage of truth.

§9. Consistency is the last thing men learn. They will not see discrepancy till pointed out. Why is it that we have so much

Digitized by Google

excellent and accepted precept in the world, and so much bad practice? Plainly because men do not see the inconsistency between what they profess and what they act. Coherence of life is as rare as coherence of thought. And as coherence of thought is promoted by logic and criticism, so coherence of conduct is promoted by the antagonism of error and the discussion of principle. There would not now be a wrong on earth had it been given to men to see the complete and consistent application of precepts which reflection has everywhere produced, and men everywhere accepted. But consistency is the most latent of human virtues, and there needs wholesome antagonism to prompt it. Men are never offended by plain speaking, provided that it be *just* speaking. I will not say one word in favour of rudeness, that greatest crime against free speech. Most men who affect to be plain and blunt are merely rude. He who masters the art of a manly explicitness, has conquered consent from the world to say whatever is written down in his conscience to utter.

§10. An anecdote of the Dean of Carlisle will illustrate this. In the recent contest in that town on the admission of works on free inquiry to the Working Men's Library, the Dean, above all the clergy, spoke in a courteous spirit. One of the working men who had waited on the Dean complained to me of the ultimate decision against them. I said, "why did you not reason the matter with the Dean, who is evidently a gentleman as well as a priest?" "We could not oppose the Dean," was the reply, "he is so courteous." My answer was—"Never forget that fact. Had you all been able to have imitated the Dean, the decision could never have gone against you. Moderation and good feeling, added to the rightfulness of your cause, would have given you the victory."

§11. Another case may be related. At the Blackburn lectures of 1851, the opponents who appeared were absolutely rancorous. The answers given them were so free from recrimination, that friendliness was manifested by the same parties in the end. A man who was present at the lecture had called a clergyman "a damned fool" in the open streets the day before—that being the best way he knew of silencing an opponent. When the meeting referred to was over, that man exclaimed—"I see *courtesy is a power:* it will tame tigers." The most eloquent tribute to pacific tactics I ever heard.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE THEORY OF FREE DISCUSSION STILL UNSETTLED.

§1. There is no need—on the contrary, great need not—to conceal the fact, that Discussion is, in some sense, in its decadence among those who have been its sole defenders—the philosophers.

Notwithstanding the great contest about it, Free Discussion is still an *unsettled question* among free inquirers. What I mean is, that to practice and promote discussion on all sides, nowhere seems to have assumed the character of a duty. My attention was first drawn to the fact by the conduct of the *Weekly Tribune*, a newspaper which existed at the time that the *Leader* was set up. The editors of the *Tribune*, though disciples of Robert Owen, denounced the *Leader* because it had articles in it written by clergymen. The *Leader* was a journal of free discussion of all opinions; and whatever newspaper assumed to represent the humanity of England, must represent the religion of England also. But because the religious opinions advocated in the *Leader* seemed erroneous to the *Tribune*, objections were made to their publication. It was plain to me that the *Tribune* saw no value in discussional publicity, unless upon its own side. About the same time I had occasion to apply to a German friend, whose opinions were of the rationalistic cast, to translate for me M. Heinzen's Letters on Atheism, written, I believe, in reply to Chevalier Bunsen. He agreed to do so for my private perusal, but *not* for publication, as he "could not in conscience help to disseminate views he believed to be pernicious." I was astonished. We, who never feared any man's opinions, found our own friends regarding with a Christian dread the opinions of others. At the same time, Mr. Joseph Barker, whose progress to liberal opinions has been very great, accepted a proposal to exchange advertisements between the *Reasoner* and the *People*, which he then edited. Mr. Barker expressed the usual conscience-qualm as to helping the publicity of our opinions. It was in answer to him that I first wrote what has since become a formula with me—viz., that a Rationalist ought to have a confidence in the truth strong enough to dare all opinions, and a conscience wide enough to help all advocacy, provided the opinions advocated are submitted to the ordeal of free discussion.

Digitized by Google

§2. For some time I have been engaged forming a library to be entitled a Library of All Churches. It is to consist of all the accredited religious books of all sects, and the Bibles of all nations—of Mahommedans, Buddhists, Parsees, and other religionists. The catalogue, instead of being divided into classes of Narrative, History, Biography, and Criticism, will be divided into the names of the different sects, accompanied by a definition of each sect, procured, where possible, from themselves. Then will follow the titles of the principal works which they acknowledge, as constituting their accredited literature; the date when the work appeared, the name of the author, an estimate of his ability, and the degree in which he is an authority among them. Of course the accredited works of different orders of Sceptics, Freethinkers, Deists, and Pantheists, will be included in such a collection.

No inconsiderable portion of the members of every sect are ignorant of the literature of their own order, and very few sects are acquainted with the literature of other sects. And the same is true, to some extent, of the shepherds as well as of the flocks. Such a library as this no Christian could form and place at public disposal. Nor would many Freethinkers adopt such a course, while their present opinions remain unchanged upon the duty of controversial publicity.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE PROBABLE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

§1. At present our liberality towards any who dissent from us is bounded by toleration. "Toleration," says Arthur Wallbridge Lunn, "that virtue of doing nothing." We find a man anxious to give utterance to his convictions—to do so is a *duty* to him.*

* The only concession of these views which I have ever met with, occurs in a speech delivered by the Rev. W. Foster, at the Soirée of the Anti-State Church Association, held in the City of London Tavern, Nov. 12, 1850. Mr. Foster said—"There is a sort of truth which every man has given to him to keep in trust—to employ in the midst and for the good of his fellow-men. This, I know, is a hard lesson for us to learn. It is very easy for us to

Digitized by Google

No man can well tell whether his views are true or false until he has made them public, and measured them against other men's judgments. There is an intellectual as well as a social solidarity, which teaches that all men are dependent on their fellows. No man who stood perfectly alone would be able to preserve sanity if he thought much—at least he would fall into eccentricity. All reformers whom I have known, who have been forced by society into a species of isolation and denied sympathy and debate, have manifested traits of insanity in some things, and I ascribe it to this circumstance. It was long before I could account for phenomena not to be mistaken in their manner, and which disappeared when the day of fraternal recognition came. To help others to utter their convictions, whether we agree with them or not, is a private kindness and a public service.

§2. Besides, a man's views are the light by which he walks the narrow path which leads to the grave. Should we not therefore pause ere we deny him the means of that direction upon which his peace and manliness depend? And we do practically deny him such direction, when we refuse him the means of testing his opinions.* To profess mere toleration for an opponent seems to

acquiesce in the statement that *our* truth, *our* convictions, *our* ideas, are held by us in sacred trust for the enlightenment and the renewal of other men's minds; but it is not so easy for us to comprehend that *other* men's ideas and convictions are held by them in sacred trust, and that they are to employ them for the enlightenment and renewal of our minds also in return. I say it is a difficult lesson for us to learn, and we are a long time in learning it. But it is a great and important lesson, which the sooner we learn the better. If this be correct, then the Papist is bound to teach that which is truth to him, as well as the Protestant—the Unitarian as well as the Trinitarian—the Deist as well as the Christian—and if there be a sincere Atheist—do not be startled—he as well as a believer in the being of a God. This is a large principle. It refers to every man—binds every man to ascertain the right idea of the universe and of its Author, that he may employ that idea for the well-being of his fellow-men, the good of society, the advancement of mankind, to the utmost extent of his power. Few, I know, are prepared to go so far as this—nevertheless to this length does the genuine evolvement of the Protestant principle logically and legitimately conduct every one of us.' —*Nonconformist*, No. 261.

* The prevailing error upon this subject was lately plainly ex-

Digitized by Google

me disgraceful. It is to say to our fellow-inquirer after truth what we do not say to the beggar. To the pauper we say, "We will *help* you to live by industry, if you have not the means." But to the truth-seeker we say, "Get the truth if you can, but from me expect no help. I am a friend of toleration, but I can give you no *aid*. All I can promise is, to *endure* you. You may get what you want if you can." And with this heartless speech the friend of truth dismisses, in these days, his struggling brother.

"Men," says Macaulay, "are never so likely to settle a question rightly as when they discuss it freely."* Then why should he not be able to assist them in doing it? What know any of us of absolute truth? No man is *sure* that he has all truth. The struggle to establish a truth in the world which I will not aid, may, for all I know, be fraught with benefit to me. Out of the world's heresy thousands have derived a new and beneficial direction of their lives. Those who have debated with me have been benefactors to me. The insight into men, manners, and truth which I have gained from discussion, exceeds, such as it is, very far all other knowledge I ever acquired from reflection or books, and I thank all who, in days before us, won free discussion for us, and all who may preserve it to us. "There is no learned man," saith Milton, "but will confess he hath much profited by reading controversies—his senses awakened, his judgment sharpened, and the truth which he holds more firmly established. If, then, it be profitable for him to read, why should it not be at least tolerable and free for his adversary to write?" Can we fail to perceive that it is an advocate's *interest* that his adversary should write?

The sense in which the help of an adversary is capable of being rendered may thus be explained. All facilities which are public should be conceded equally to opponents. The public hall

pressed, on the occasion of an effort being made to introduce free-thinking works into the library of the Working Man's Institute, Brighton:—"A vast number of persons, who will gladly assist in putting within the reach of the working man all works of a kind calculated to instruct, improve, and amuse, will not assist in the dissemination of works whose professed object is to destroy. To ask a man of any religion—Christian, Mahommedan, or Jew—to buy books attacking that religion which he believes to be true, is clearly to ask him to do what he cannot, ought not, will not, dare not do."—*Brighton Herald*, No. 2297.

* Critical and Historical Essays, vol. i., p. 248.

Digitized by Google

should be equally accessible, the public paper equally open, public law equally free, civil and political rights equally conferred on the advocates of all opinions submitted to discussion. Were the purse of the state in my hands, and it was determined to endow parties, I would endow the party of my opponent as cheerfully as my own. *All* should enjoy endowments, or none should have them. There should be equality.

I would even go farther than this. Where a sect was proscribed, or deprived of civil rights, as in the case of the Jews, I would aid them out of my private means, to compensate to them the public injustice. As a general rule, I could not promise to devote my personal energies to developing my adversaries' views, as in such case a dozen opponents might equally claim my subscription, and leave me without means to advance that which I thought true. But all civil rights should be equal, and all public facilities should be *common* to opponents as well as friends. And where they are not so, I consider it my duty to see that it is so.

As a party, we have certainly done this more than Christians have. Mr. Watson, our London publisher, constantly supplies works which even rudely controvert views he holds to be important. All over the country our bookselling friends freely sell Bibles and religious books as well as works on free inquiry. It can hardly be said that Christians do the same.

§3. An objection is founded to the tenor of the reasoning here pursued. One says—"To help another to advocate what I believe to be error is to disseminate what I know to be evil, and I cannot do it." In answer to this it may be said, a man must not assume the absolute infallibility of his views. He may assume them to be so well established that he may found his practice upon them, but he must not assume their infallibility or he will grow intolerant. The reason why the introduction of all new truth into the world is so humiliating is, that excellent men assume that they have the truth already, and they forthwith oppose or neglect the Discoverer and the Reformer.

§4. But my ground is somewhat more definite than this objection supposes. My proposal is, that we should be willing to facilitate the advocacy of all opinion, however wrong we may think it—*provided* (and this is the condition) *that the advocates of the given opinion consent to the free discussion of it.* If a man refuses the free discussion of the opinion he claims to advocate, he is to be regarded as dangerous—as one who would assail mankind, giving them no defence against his error. If a man is

Digitized by Google

afraid of free discussion, he has not confidence in his own views, and has no moral right to interrupt the public progress by asking men to attend to what he is himself uncertain about. A man's right to destroy himself is as sacred as his right to save himself. The constitution of human society is such that we must protect people in the privilege of pursuing their own destruction. We do it daily in the instances in which we aid men to amass riches and allow them to employ it as they please for their moral destruction. We do it when we aid them to get any kind of food, and leave them to deprave and destroy themselves in its consumption. You cannot introduce a mere political toleration into society as you have hitherto done in religion. You are active in your help in matters of civilisation, and you trust to intelligence to regulate the issue. What I propose in free discussion is free from even this casualty. I say, if you facilitate a man in the advocacy of his views, under the condition of free discussion, you do *not* help the dissemination of error. You help error to *its own destruction*. For it cannot exist in the arena of free debate.

We ought to have free utterance, that all consciences may be heard, and all truth made known; and we ought to have free discussion that all declaration may be tested. Nothing can harm society which will bear that ordeal. Chase all opinions into the field of battle. There Error dies—Truth only can live. Put down whatever opinion you can in debate. There we may destroy what we can; but we are unmanly if we attempt to assassinate opinion by toleration, which is starving it to death—by calumny, which is abusing it to death. Give it a *fair* field and a *free* and *open* encounter with Truth, and who ever knew Error get the advantage there?

§5. Here we may notice that there is no force in the objection, so often urged to the free utterance of opinion—namely, that if permitted, the country would be overrun with ribaldry. First, this will not happen. Secondly, it would not be objected to if it did. Up to this time the clergy do not show themselves the serious enemies of ribaldry. I wish it were so. There is not a town or village in Great Britain, where books are sold, where you may not walk into the vendor's shop and find works ribald and even obscene. The clergyman sees these, and knows that the demand for them comes from the ignorant. Yet he makes no effort to aid the Mechanics' Institution, or the Political and Social Institution, which would create new and purer tastes among the people. Nor is the vendor afraid to show such publications. The "Logic of Death" or the *Reasoner* he carefully

Digitized by Google

hides, lest the utterance of conscientious opinion on religion should embroil him with the religious customer, or mark him out to the denunciation of the Minister. But the ribald publication lies exposed: the vendors know there is safety there. It is not obscenity, but conscience which the priests mark by their practical reprobation.

§6. But by the test here proposed for the recognition of opinion —namely, that it be subjected to public scrutiny—we guard against being called upon to acquiesce in the publication of ribaldry or obscenity. No man can hold up his head and propose the discussion of literary and personal viciousness. We therefore dispose of this vexed question without even being under the necessity of drawing a line of demarcation between it and theology. We oblige it to draw its own line of demarcation, and take itself away, and keep clear of us.

§7. If this doctrine here insisted on prevailed, what a different world we should have! Our greatest discoverers, priests, philosophers, and physicians, would no longer perish at the gate of society, denied admission by those whom they have so much enriched. All would be helped who deserved to be helped, and those in error would be put down. Free discussion would come to be regarded, as it ever has been in fact, the Protector of the Public from superstition, delusion, imposition, and error.

My own experience is altogether in favour of the change I recommend. For years we have published, at our own expense, weekly in the *Reasoner*, where they could be controverted, the best statements we could get on the Christian side. In thus helping the publicity of Christian opinion, we knew that we were helping its refutation; and Christians themselves are of that opinion, for we have great difficulty in obtaining defences from them. This course would bring to any in the right, success and independence; and our motto of years is, "They who believe that they have Truth ask no favour, save that of being heard: they dare the judgment of Mankind: refused Co-operation, they invoke Opposition, for Opposition is their Opportunity." Such need no favour, they need but fairness; and if they are conceded equitable opposition, it becomes to them a success.

False is the tongue which tells us that we implore debate in vanity. Let our lives bear witness whether we have idly entreated the privilege of controversy. We sought it for light, we coveted it for direction, and we maintain it for self-defence. We have won the privilege dearly, and shall not resign it. We appealed to the clergy, and they would not heed us. Standing on the dim

Digitized by Google

and shadowy verge of the future, where every man must tread for himself and alone the vestibule of the eternal labyrinth, we appealed to our brother traveller for light and help. We trusted to his Christian profession of love and truth, of service and gentle speech, and he turned from us in contempt, bestowed no word upon us, but went and denounced us to those who had influence—and abandoned us to the fury of the bigot and the vulgarity of the rabble, and we were driven away like a plague ship to carry our agony into the loneliness of the sea. But we did not perish—we conquered truths which are life and safety to us, and which Christianity will never more conceal, and which we shall not cease to proclaim.

THE END.

Printed by Holyoake Brothers, 3, Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row.

Digitized by Google

CHILDREN'S SECULAR SCHOOL BOOKS,

BY THE SAME WRITER.

No series (excepting those illustrated by Mr. Honeysuckle) of Secular School Books exist. Nearly every primer for children plunges the little reader at once into the mysteries of faith, and the unsettled dogmas of theology—whereas creeds should be reserved till the day of ripened powers and disciplined judgment. The proper instruction of children consists in the cultivation of the feelings and the training of the observing faculties. These books are compiled on this principle. The illustrations are intended to amuse, and the matter to instruct. The language is the simple language of children—the ideas are the idea of things. There are repetitions (without which discipline is impossible); but the repetitions are veiled under varieties. There are distinctions (without which knowledge cannot be accumulated); but the distinctions are plain and broad, and the words taught belong to familiar objects of in-door life and out-door nature.

THE LITTLE CHILD'S FIRST LETTER BOOK	0	1
THE LITTLE CHILD'S SECOND LETTER BOOK, for teaching Reading and Writing at once	0	2
THE LITTLE CHILD'S WORD-BOOK, for teaching Spelling, Meaning, and Grammar at once	0	3
THE LITTLE CHILD'S FIRST READING BOOK OF TALES, FABLES, AND VERSE	0	4

The four books will be issued at the same time.

J. Watson, Publisher, 3, Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row.

The next volume of the Cabinet of Reason will be by the EDITOR, and entitled

ORGANISATION,

NOT OF ARMS, BUT IDEAS.

Che a compagne a padrone.—ITALIAN PROVERB.
(He who has a partner has a master.)

Intended for the use of Political, Social, and Religious Reformers, and to answer the questions—What does Organisation mean? and what does it imply to carry it out?

Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

CANCELLED

28432 32

OCT 21 1970

5036586

FEB 5 1970 ILL

Digitized by Google

Phil 8662.5.10
Why do the clergy avoid discussion,
Widener Library 003342365
3 2044 084 657 774

Digitized by Google